

## Sentencing

**Recommendation 23:** Expand the use of a “problem-solving” justice model in dealing with mental health issues, certain drug offenses and family-related legal problems.

- In May 2007, a new Drug Court sentencing program began in Grafton County, offering drug users an opportunity to participate in an intense, court supervised rehabilitation program for two years instead of going to jail.

The Grafton County drug court program extends the effort throughout New Hampshire to establish community-based programs in which judges and court staff, law enforcement, local government officials, corrections and treatment providers collaborate to help offenders whose substance abuse leads to repeated crimes. Strafford County began an adult drug court program in January 2006; juvenile drug courts are also now in operation in six district court locations throughout the state and two more scheduled to begin operations in the upcoming months.

- In Nashua, District Court Judge James Leary has led the effort to establish a new program called “Community Connections,” designed as an alternative to the court system for persons with mental health issues. It is intended to maximize communication and cooperation between the mental health system and the criminal justice system. The intent is to:
  - 1) Improve access to community mental health services;
  - 2) expedite case processing time with a team approach;
  - 3) reduce recidivism;
  - 4) improve well-being of identified mentally ill defendants;
  - 5) ensure that punishment for relapse and infractions be swift and graduated to fit the circumstances; and
  - 6) incorporate the many community-based educational, vocational, counseling and self-help courses and programs into a comprehensive program of self-improvement.